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HAPPY PRESS ASSIGNMENT

Prince Philip Looks To Madison Avenue

By Tony Brenna

His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, who in England once turned water sprinklers on cameramen covering a royal visit to a flower show and who is well-known for his "salty" naval language in dealing with reporters, will be in the care of Madison Avenue publicists when he visits the U.S. in March.

Firm with the "hot potato" assignment is Rogers and Cowan, public relations experts with offices around the world, specialists in handling VIPs of the Hollywood kind, soap company product projectors and promoters of *Playboy* magazine.

PR man with the prestige task of protecting the Prince's image is Henry Rogers, chairman of R&C—the company recently handled press relations for Brigitte Bardot's visit to America—who will accompany Philip throughout his 10,000-mile 11-day tour as "honorary press officer." Said Mr. Rogers: "Our job is not to promote the prince.

He is magnetic enough. Our job will be to make it easy for the press to meet him."

In actual fact, Mr. Rogers has been appointed by the Variety Clubs International, a charitable show business organization which invited Prince Philip, a life member, to the U.S.

The appointment is a real feather in the R&C cap. The British Royal family traditionally shuns contact with professional publicists, press relations usually being in the dignified hands of Palace officials. Abroad, touring "royals" are carefully guided by the British Information Service and embassy diplomats.

British Press Applauds

That Philip had approved the appointment of professional pr specialists got big play in the British press. Jeffrey Blyth, New York bureau chief of the *London Daily Mail* dug out the story. His colorful exclusive explained that Prince Philip would "share the services of a publicity firm which once photographed a live octopus wearing a well-known watch on one of its tentacles." The pr assignment for the Prince was unique, he pointed out.

In a follow-up story, Mr. Blyth quoted Mr. Rogers as saying that he hoped that the Prince would give American-style press conferences during his U.S. tour. The publicist is flying to London later this month for an attempt to persuade the Prince to give press interviews of the "no questions barred" variety.

"If he succeeds it will be the first time a member of the British royal family has agreed to give this type of interview," reported Mr. Blyth.

The following day, London's *Daily Express* picked up the story, proclaiming in 48pt type: "Excellent! Just what the Palace needs," and commenting: "Three great rousing royal cheers this morning for Prince Philip! His decision to accept a professional American pr firm to handle publicity for his tour is the best thing that has happened to royalty since the invention of the camera."

'Cadillacs of PR'

Rogers and Cowan were described as "the cadillacs of pr" by a writer who also noted: "They will see there are no silly bungles like the ones which so marred the American trip of Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon."

The British paper also opined: "They will be of inestimable value to Prince Philip in his task of keeping the American press happy. Of course, if he wants to launch some Naval slang at them, nothing will stop him. But it is less likely to happen if the Prince and Press have experts on hand to see there are no misunderstandings."

Meanwhile, back in New York, a spokesman for R&C—obviously delighted with the international coverage (the story came back to the U.S. from London via UPI)—told *E&P*: "This is going to be one of the trickiest pr jobs we've had to handle; it's like no account we've ever had. The Bardot assignment was difficult in terms of logistics, press pressure, but this should beat that."

He explained, however, that his company would be handling the visit on a non-fee basis, merely recouping expenses. But, as the spokesman said, there is "quite considerable prestige involved . . ."